

The National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) manages Atlantic billfish (including blue marlin, white marlin, sailfish and longbill spearfish) and Atlantic swordfish to ensure long-term, sustainable fisheries for these species.

**HMS ANGLING PERMIT**

- Owners of vessels used to fish recreationally (*i.e.*, no sale of fish) for Atlantic HMS (billfish, swordfish, sharks and tunas) are required to obtain an HMS Angling permit from NMFS.
- Recreational fishermen may not sell, barter, or trade Atlantic HMS when fishing with an HMS Angling permit.
- Recreational bag limits, size limits, and reporting requirements for each species apply.
- Owners of vessels that catch, retain, possess, or land Atlantic billfish should have this permit, because minimum size and other requirements apply to any billfish harvested from the management unit (Atlantic Ocean), regardless of where caught. For Atlantic swordfish, this permit is required when fishing in Federal and international waters, although additional state regulations for fishing permits and reporting may also apply.

**HMS CHARTER/HEADBOAT PERMIT**

- Owners of vessels that carry passengers for hire and fish for Atlantic HMS must obtain an annual HMS Charter/headboat permit.
- Recreational anglers fishing onboard a permitted charter/headboat vessel are

covered by the vessel permit and do not need a permit.

- Swordfish and sharks can only be sold if appropriate commercial permits have also been issued to the vessel. Atlantic billfish may never be sold or purchased.
- Reporting and other requirements apply.
- Owners of vessels that catch, retain, possess, or land Atlantic billfish should have this permit, because minimum size and other requirements apply to any billfish harvested from the management unit (Atlantic Ocean), regardless of where caught. For Atlantic swordfish, this permit is required when fishing in Federal and international waters, although additional state regulations for fishing permits and reporting may also apply.

**HOW DO I OBTAIN A PERMIT?**

Atlantic HMS Angling, and Atlantic HMS Charter/headboat permits are available by calling 1-888-872-8862 or by logging onto [www.nmfspermits.com](http://www.nmfspermits.com).

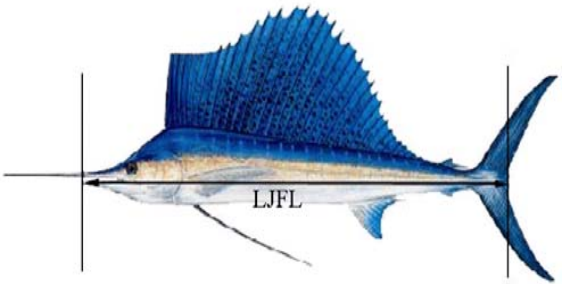
**AUTHORIZED GEARS**

Species	Authorized Gears
Billfishes	Rod & Reel
Swordfish	Rod & Reel; handline

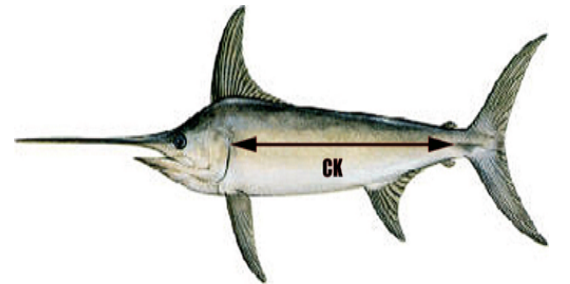
**MINIMUM SIZE OR WEIGHT LIMITS\***

Blue Marlin	99 inches (LJFL)
White Marlin	66 inches (LJFL)
Sailfish	63 inches (LJFL)
Longbill Spearfish	Prohibited
Swordfish	47 inches (LJFL), or 29 inches (CK), or 33 lb. minimum dressed weight

\*Applies to billfish from the management unit (Atlantic Ocean) regardless of where caught and Atlantic swordfish in federal and international waters. Additional state regulations may also apply.



Whole Fish - lower jaw fork length (LJFL)



Head or Tail Removed - cleithrum to caudal keel (CK)

**LANDING RESTRICTIONS**

Atlantic billfish must be landed with the head, fins, and bill intact through offloading. Atlantic swordfish must be landed in round or dressed form through offloading.

**RECREATIONAL SWORDFISH BAG LIMIT**

One North Atlantic swordfish per person, up to three per vessel per day, may be retained. Regardless of the length of the trip no more than the daily limit of swordfish may be possessed onboard a vessel, including those landed by a Charter/headboat vessel. Recreational anglers may not land Atlantic swordfish south of 5°N latitude.

**“NO SALE” BY HMS ANGLING CATEGORY PERMIT HOLDERS**

HMS Angling category permit holders are not allowed to sell, barter, or trade Atlantic swordfish or swordfish pieces, unless they also possess a valid commercial swordfish permit. Because the commercial swordfish fishery operates under limited access, new permits are not available. The transfer of any existing limited access commercial swordfish permit must be processed by NMFS.

Persons may not sell or purchase any Atlantic billfish. Atlantic blue and white marlin may not be possessed onboard a vessel which also has pelagic longline gear onboard.

**RECREATIONAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

Owners of recreational and charter/headboat vessels **must report** landings (*i.e.*, fish kept) of recreationally-caught Atlantic blue marlin, white marlin, sailfish, and swordfish to NMFS by calling toll-free 1-800-894-5528 within 24

hours of landing at the dock. During the call, the vessel owner will be asked to provide their name, phone number, HMS permit number, species caught, and size of fish. NMFS will return the call and provide a confirmation of the reported landing. In Maryland and North Carolina, vessel owners should report their recreational billfish and swordfish landings at state-operated reporting stations. For reporting information in Maryland, contact (410) 213-1531. In North Carolina, contact (800) 338-7804. Vessel permit holders are responsible for reporting tournament related landings, if tournament operators do not fulfill tournament reporting requirements.

**HMS CHARTER/HEADBOAT LOGBOOKS**

NMFS will select a percentage of permitted Charter/headboats to complete a logbook for each trip. Selected charter/headboat permit holders will be notified of the logbook requirement by letter.

**VOLUNTARY OBSERVER PROGRAM FOR CHARTER/HEADBOATS**

A voluntary observer program is being used to more effectively monitor catch and release rates, and condition and survival of released fish. If you would like to participate in the observer program contact the HMS Division at (301) 713-2347.

**APPLICABILITY OF MANAGEMENT MEASURES**

Generally, U.S.-flagged vessels and U.S. citizens must comply with Atlantic billfish and swordfish regulations *throughout the Atlantic Ocean and adjacent waters*. For example, Atlantic billfish and swordfish landed overseas

from U.S. vessels must be reported. Please call HMS Headquarters if you have a question about a specific situation.

**BILLFISH CATCH AND RELEASE FISHERY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

NMFS encourages catch and release of Atlantic billfish, and the use of circle hooks to maximize post-release survival. A fish that is not retained must be released in a manner that will maximize its survival, and without removing it from the water.

***NEED MORE INFORMATION?***

[www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/](http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/sfa/hms/)  
[www.nmfspermits.com](http://www.nmfspermits.com)

1-888-872-8862 (HMS Permits)  
1-301-713-2347 (HMS Headquarters)  
1-727-824-5399 (Southeast HMS Office)

National Marine Fisheries Service  
Highly Migratory Species Management Division  
1315 East - West Highway  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

**Atlantic Billfish & Atlantic Swordfish  
Recreational  
Management Measures**



**National Marine Fisheries Service**

Office of Sustainable Fisheries  
Highly Migratory Species Management  
Division

This pamphlet provides a summary of HMS regulations, as of February 2005. For the complete and official set of regulations, see 50 CFR part 635 and the Federal Register, or call the Highly Migratory Species Management Division at 301-713-2347. If there is a discrepancy between the regulations in 50 CFR part 635 and this brochure, the regulations will take precedence. This brochure is produce in compliance with Section 212 of the Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act.